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Auden Can Wait: Introducing the Academic Section of In geveb

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AUDEN CAN WAIT: INTRODUCING THE ACADEMIC SECTION OF *IN GEVEB*

Sunny Yudkoff

“What does it mean to be a poet of an abandoned culture?” the Yiddish poet Jacob Glatstein once asked. “It means that I have to be aware of [Auden](#) but Auden need never have heard of me.”¹ Among scholars of Yiddish culture, Glatstein’s words are well known. The pithy statement has become academic shorthand for the dilemma of Yiddish writing in the twentieth century. There exists a body of literature that is rich, varied, and dramatic, yet it remains confined to the purview of a limited readership. Recently, Anita Norich has revisited these lines, commenting that “far from being self-effacing, [Glatstein] implies that Auden *should* have heard of him.”² On this reading, Glatstein’s rhetorical question and answer is not just descriptive but retrospectively prescriptive. Auden and his cohort should already be familiar with the Yiddish modernist’s work.

For those of us involved in the academic section of *In geveb*, it is tempting to assume a similarly prescriptive posture—both with respect to reading Glatstein’s work (a definite *should!*) as well as with regards to where we think Yiddish research *should* be heading. Yet as indicated by the present selection of essays, review articles, and interdisciplinary scholarly reflections, many different *shoulds* are welcome here. Our goal is to establish this digital platform as a meeting point for all those whose work falls along the broad spectrum of Yiddish Studies, including those who self-identify as Yiddishists and those who boast no such affiliation. To that end, as part of our launch, we have invited a cross-section of researchers—historians and literary specialists; junior and senior scholars; early modernists and modernists—to identify one question in Yiddish Studies that is occupying them at the moment or to examine an issue in contemporary academic discourse that informs their approach to Yiddish Studies. The

¹ Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 452.

² Anita Norich, *Discovering Exile: Yiddish and Jewish American Culture During the Holocaust* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 22.

open-ended prompts have resulted in six critical reflections on the political, aesthetic, intellectual, and categorical possibilities of Yiddish as language and lens.

Today, we bring you the first two responses. Cecile Kuznitz (Bard College) asks readers to consider how the heuristic category of “Yiddish architecture” allows us to reexamine the relationship between language and space. At the same time, Zohar Weiman-Kelman (University of Pennsylvania) pushes us to recover queer narratives of continuity in a history of women’s writing and translation, drawing our attention to a stage shared by the poets Kadia Molodowsky and Adrienne Rich. Over the next two weeks, four additional voices will enter the conversation. Caroline Luce (University of California, Los Angeles) will encourage scholars and readers to “Go West!” in order to chronicle the regional and stylistic affiliations of Yiddish writers of the Pacific Coast. Returning to European ground, Iris Idelson-Shein (Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main) will argue for the difficult if imperative project of recovering silenced women’s voices of the early modern period—especially in those Yiddish texts specifically designed for women’s consumption. Alan Rosen will follow by directing us to understand how certain voices, histories, and acts of memorialization would go unrecognized if Yiddish-language sources were not integrated into the study of the Holocaust. Finally, Samuel Spinner (Johns Hopkins University) will ask whether there exists such a thing as Yiddish photography, prompting us to reexamine how Yiddish is framed and reframed as text, image, and genre in the work of Moishe Vorobeichic specifically, and in art-cultural criticism more generally. These opening pieces test the limits of what Yiddish Studies *should* be and *should* do, and they—quite purposely—do not always agree.

Today, we also present two inaugural academic articles. In “Tongue Twisted: Between *Mame-loshn* and *Loshn-koydesh*,” Chana Kronfeld (University of California at Berkeley) and Robert Peckerar ([Yiddishkayt](#)) invite us to investigate the biblical intertextuality and Yiddish-Hebrew “collocations” mobilized by Itzik Manger’s poetry. As Kronfeld and Peckerar argue, this examination reveals “another chapter in the latent, repressed, but persistent conversation between Hebrew and Yiddish modernism in the twentieth century.” David Roskies (Jewish Theological Seminary) similarly works to bring a Hebrew-Yiddish conversation to light in his extended review of Avraham Novershtern’s (Hebrew University) recent publication, *Kan gar ha’am ha-yehudi: sifrut yidish be-artsot ha-brit (Here Dwells the Jewish People: A Century of American Yiddish Literature)*. As Roskies demonstrates, Novershtern relies here on a particular Jerusalem style of scholarship—erudite, footnoted, and thick—while at the same time drawing on the interpretive lessons taught to him by the Israeli Yiddish poet Abraham Sutzkever. For Novershtern, the story of American Yiddish literature is simultaneously complex and coherent—a description that, as Roskies shows, likewise defines Novershtern’s own analytical approach.

From Berkeley to New York to Jerusalem, these pieces remind us how varied are the methodological maps and legacies of Yiddish inquiry. And it is precisely this diversity of approaches, as well as the disciplinary range of Kuznitz, Weiman-Kelman, Luce, Idelson-Shein, Rosen, and Spinner that we hope will continue to be represented in the academic section of the site. Yiddish language and culture resonates across academic fields and we invite musicologists, linguists, anthropologists, historians, sociologists,

and philosophers as well as scholars of literature, gender, and religious studies to submit articles for consideration. All submissions to the academic section of *In geveb* undergo a thorough peer-review process.

Now, there are certainly many other things I *could* have said in this introduction to the academic section of *In geveb*. But, with Glatstein as my guide, let me end simply by saying: You *should* read this journal. Auden can wait.